

ER-6-5351a

24 January 1954

Mr. Roger W. Jones
Assistant Director
Legislative Reference
Bureau of the Budget
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Jones:

This Agency has received a letter from Chairman Vinson of the House Armed Services Committee stating that at the request of Congressman Cole the comments of CIA are solicited on H.R. 936, a bill authorizing and requesting the President to award the Legion of Merit posthumously to Major William V. Holohan.

This Agency's views on the proposed legislation are attached herewith, and it is requested that we be authorized to submit them to the Congress.

Sincerely yours,

Walter L. Pforzheimer
Legislative Counsel

Attachment



Draft - 21 January 1955

The Honorable Carl Vinson, Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I appreciate the opportunity offered by your letter of January 17, 1955, to comment on the bill, H.R. 936, introduced by Congressman Cole. The case of Major William V. Holohan has, of course, received much publicity, and the facts generally are a matter of public record, but the official records of the Office of Strategic Services in which the Holohan papers are retained are in the custody of this Agency and have been thoroughly reviewed by members of my immediate staff.

Major Holohan was personally chosen by Major General William J. Donovan, then Director of the Office of Strategic Services, to lead the mission in Northern Italy, which is variously known as the Mangostine and/or Chrysler mission. This selection was a matter of importance, because the division of the Italian partisans behind the German lines into Communist and non-Communist dominated groups increasingly complicated the political situation in Northern Italy and the attempts of the Office of Strategic Services to utilize these partisan groups to combat the Germans. While the main objective was still to harass and assist the defeat of the German armies, these political developments held most serious implications for the

post-war world. It was essential that missions dispatched to direct and supply partisans understand these implications and assure, insofar as possible, that the Communist dominated groups were in no way strengthened materially or assisted politically by American aid.

The records indicate that Major Holohan was selected not only for his military qualifications but for his qualities of integrity, strength of character, and devotion to American ideals. In the correspondence between Major Holohan and his commanding officer, it is obvious that he was well aware of the delicacy of his mission and the dangers not only from German reprisals but also from political machinations of those with whom he was to be in contact. Despite this awareness, he proceeded to organize and prepare a mission as rapidly as possible and was successful in achieving his target by air drop in September 1944. In itself, to parachute into strange country occupied by hostile forces takes a high degree of courage and fortitude. These were magnified by the particular circumstances obtaining in the area where Major Holohan landed. From that point to the time of his death he carried out his assigned mission with exemplary ability and courage under constantly hazardous conditions.


While the circumstances of his death have never been established by an American court of law, the documentation of the case points

with great directness to the conclusion that Major Holohan met his death at the hands of members of his own team. The motives involved are a matter for speculation, but there is no question of Major Holohan's honorable conduct to the moment when he met death while engaged in the performance of his official duties.

We trust the foregoing will be of assistance in consideration of the bill, but I feel I must add one thought. Many, many Office of Strategic Services' representatives, military and civilian, went behind enemy lines by parachute drop, by water approach, or by infiltration. Many did so in the face of circumstances equally or in some instances, more immediately hazardous to their lives than did Major Holohan. Some lost their lives and others were wounded or otherwise injured, and in some cases were captured, tortured, and executed. Many of these have already received decorations in person or posthumously. If it is determined to honor Major Holohan in the manner proposed by the bill, I feel it should be recognized that he was but one of a band of brave and devoted Americans who undertook service of this type with full awareness of the hazards to be encountered.

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ER-6-5351 b


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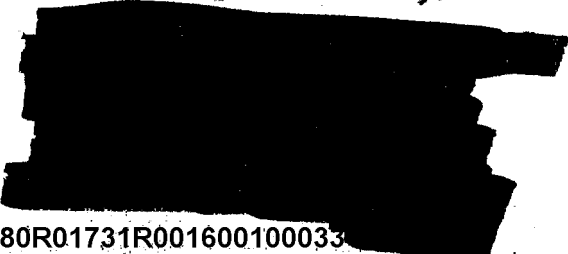
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The Bureau of the Budget advises that they have no objection to the submission of this report.

With kindest regards.

Sincerely,

SIGNED

Allen W. Dulles
Director

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ER-6-5351-6

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General Counsel

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[REDACTED]

Deputy Director/Support

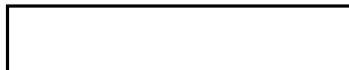
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STANDARD FORM NO. 64

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

STAT

TO :



DATE: 17 June 1955

FROM : Legislative Counsel

SUBJECT: Letter to Chairman Vinson

Attached is a redraft of the letter to Chairman Vinson on the Holohan decoration. The Army has consistently opposed this and similar legislation on the grounds that decorations of this sort should be confined to awards by the agencies authorized to make them and not by special legislation. Therefore, the Bureau of the Budget has felt that our reply to Chairman Vinson should be somewhat qualified, which accounts for the addition of paragraph 3.

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Walter L. Pf~~o~~zheimer

STANDARD FORM NO. 64

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

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TO : 

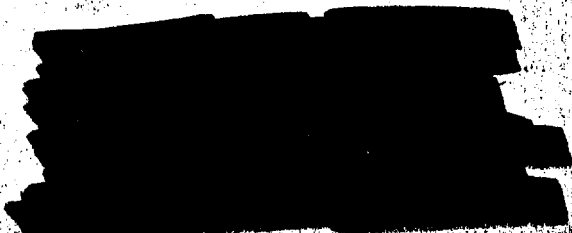

FROM : Legislative Counsel

SUBJECT: Letter for Chairman Vinson

DATE: 13 June 1955

In regard to the attached letter to Chairman Vinson on the bill for Major Holohan, it should be noted that it is necessary for the Bureau of the Budget to approve any reply we send to the Congress. As the Bureau felt that our position might be at variance with the position expressed last year by the Department of the Army, it was necessary for the Bureau to get a re-expression of the Army's views. As this is a bill of low priority all around, considerable time elapsed between the time we sent our draft to the Bureau until we received the Bureau of the Budget's okay a few days ago.

STAT

Walter L. Pförzheimer
Legislative Counsel

*Changes suggested
by General Cabell*



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

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